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CLAIMS

1. A method for optimizing ingredient selection for further processing comprising the steps of;

providing a supply of at least one ingredient;

5 calculating at least a first element of said at least one ingredient contained within said supply; and

selecting said at least one ingredient from said supply based on said calculation which correspond to a predetermined recipe to achieve an end product.

- 2. A method for optimizing ingredient selection as recited in claim 1, wherein said first element is an approximate cost of using said ingredient.
- 3. A method for optimizing ingredient selection as recited in claim 1, wherein said first element relates to nutritional properties of said ingredient.
- 4. A method for optimizing ingredient selection as recited in claim 1, wherein said first element relates to functional properties of said ingredient.
- A method for optimizing ingredient selection as recited in claim
 wherein the nutritional property is protein content.
- 6. A method for optimizing ingredient selection as recited in claim 3, wherein the nutritional property is fiber content.
- 7. A method for optimizing ingredient selection as recited in claim 1, wherein said first element relates to a physical property of said ingredient.
 - 8. A method for optimizing ingredient selection as recited in claim 6, wherein the physical property is moisture content.
- 9. A method for optimizing ingredient selection as recited in claim
 25 6, wherein the physical property is weight.
 - 10. A method for optimizing ingredient selection as recited in claim 1, wherein said recipe is for flour manufacture.
 - 11. A method for optimizing ingredient selection as recited in claim 1, wherein said ingredient is a grain.

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- 12. A method for producing a blended product comprising:
- (a) downloading, over a network, time-sensitive data representing the current cost of at least one material whose price fluctuates based at least in part on market conditions;
- (b) using said downloaded current cost information to calculate an actual cost of blending said product;
 - (c) automatically calculating the difference between said actual blend cost and a model blend cost; and
 - (d) making a decision to blend said product based at least in part on said calculation.
 - 13. The method as in claim 11 wherein said material comprises grain and said downloaded cost data comprises a grain cost card.
 - 14. A system for controlling grain mixing, said system being coupled over a data network to a source of current grain prices, said system receiving information relating to currently prevailing grain cost, said system including:

a blend processor which, based on desired mix and source bin designations and said currently prevailing grain cost, calculates a blend cost and compares said blend cost with a model cost, said blend processor generating a blend mix output that specifies the amount of each of plural grain lots to mix in order to achieve said desired mix; and

a mass storage device operatively coupled to said blend processor, said mass storage device storing historical data concerning previous blends.

- 15. The method as in claim 13 wherein said blend processor retrieves currently prevailing grain cost data via said data network at least once a day.
- 16. The system of claim 13 wherein said blend processor generates a blend entry data form providing interactive user input/output.
- 17. The system as in claim 13 wherein said blend mix output includes number of bushel information, percent protein information, and grain moisture information.

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- 18. The system as in claim 13 wherein said blend mix output includes information indicating a difference between actual blend cost and model blend cost.
- The system as in claim 13 wherein said blend processor further
 produces a blend summary sheet for previous blends.
 - 20. The system of claim 13 wherein said blend processor prints a blend mix sheet and a blend summary sheet.
 - 21. The system of claim 13 wherein said grain comprises wheat and said blend processor specifies a blend of plural wheat lots to provide flour of a desired grade.